

**Architectural and Historical Impact Assessment for the
property described as Burnside/ Flanders/ Maindee House on
the Remainder of Lot 16 of the farm Lot 31 1560, Mount
Edgecombe**



Front veranda (Photo: Author 2011)

**Prepared for: Tongaat Hulett Developments (Pty) Ltd
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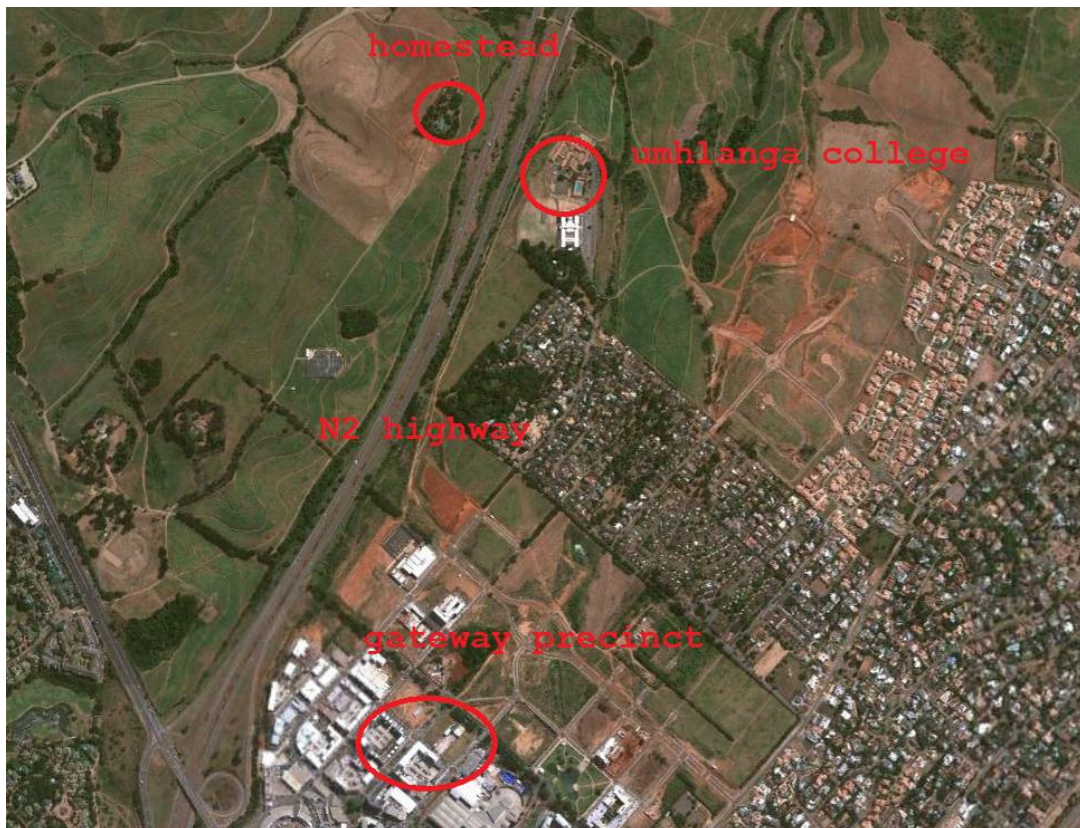


Fig 1: 'Google' image showing the location of the site.

1. Introduction

Debbie Whelan of Archaic Consulting was contacted by Mr. Rory Wilkinson from Tongaat Hulett Developments regarding the proposed demolition of an old house simply described as Cornubia. This is located in the high development zone north west of the Gateway Precinct at Umhlanga Ridge, and north of much of the Mount Edgecombe developments (see Fig 1). This house is intended for demolition in order to make way for an intensive mixed use and income development, and the hill on which it sits to be flattened. This report intends to assess this dwelling for significance in terms of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Heritage Act no 4 of 2008.

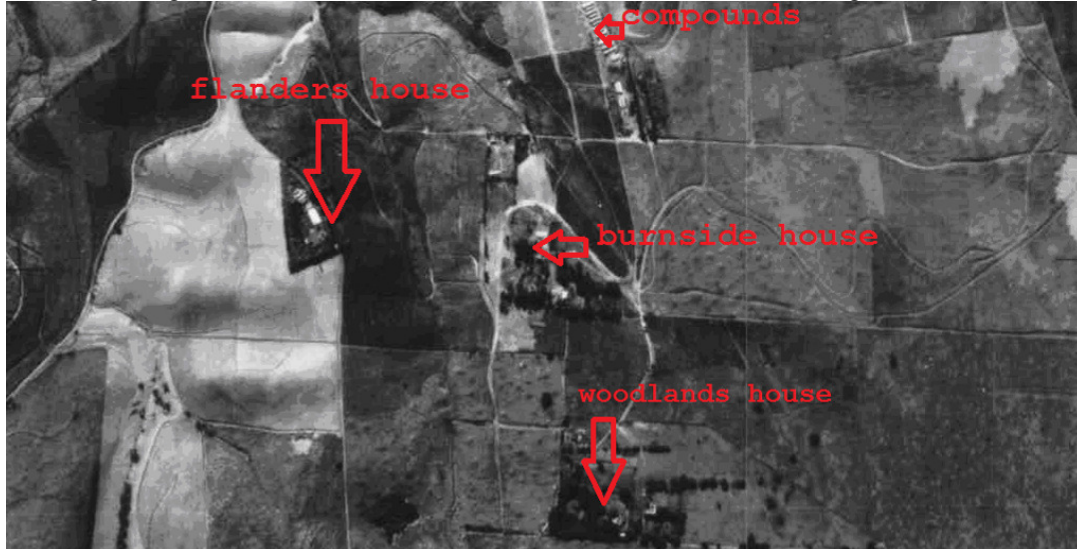


Fig 2: 1937 aerial photograph with names as on the 1969 topocadastral map 2931CA.

2. Methodology

There were two site inspections carried out by Archaic Consulting. The second on September 9th 2011, allowed access to the site which is currently inhabited by a manager employed by Tongaat Hulett and is highly secured with fences and dogs. Prior to the site visit, preliminary investigations were carried out, assessing the basic history of the property in order to inform the direction of the research. However, although this property was found to be a swathe of Byrne Settlement lands, little subsequent information was found, except that found in the land registers and documented in the relevant chapter hereunder.

The name originally was understood to be Cornubia, being part of the cane plantation which holds that name, and the name of the farm on another Byrne Lot close by. However, the 1969 topocadastral shows this house named as Flanders, and in the 1989 version, Burnside. Mr Robert Grant, the tenant of the house for some three decades, knows the house simply as 'Blackburn', another generic farm name in the area dating back to some of the early estates. This property does not feature in Professor Walter Peter's North Coast Survey, commissioned by Amafa in 1996. It is also highly possible that this building was known as Maindee House.

The information in the land registers was used to try to alleviate this issue, by correspondence with the names and addresses given in the Natal Almanacs from between 1880 and 1930. This held little further elucidatory information on the name of the farm, and, indeed, its primary owner at the turn of the 20th century appears nowhere.

Knowing that the property was part of Burnside, and then Natal, Estates, prompted consultation of the Campbell papers and photographs at the Killie Campbell Collections. However, this drew little success, as Campbell's primary operations were at Mount Edgecombe to the south. The Women's Institute *Early Days in Mount Edgecombe* provided scant information, but did hint at Maindee House. Thus, with such dearth of information, for the purposes of this report the author assumes that there is no immediate connection with social, technical, historical or scientific processes, thus necessarily evaluating the house on its merits alone.

3. Brief history of Subdivision 16 of Lot 31

The property described variantly as Burnside/Flanders/Maindee on the Remainder of Lot 16 of the parent farm Lot 31 1560, was one of 43 plots in the subdivision granted to Joseph Byrne as an immigration scheme farm in 1851. The Land Registers reflect the following ownership on Erf 15, later renamed Erf 16. It was originally allocated to the Byrne Immigration Scheme settler Newbury, and then in 1854 was transferred to William Colley. In 1863 James Newberry¹ purchased the property and in 1896 this was transferred to Vernatashellan and Padametta (names unclear). In 1907 Henry Isaac Oliver purchased the property, and then in 1914 this transferred to Thomas Simpson and Francis Hellier.² The history of the house is obscure, except for a note in the 1964 *Early days in Mount Edgecombe*: 'A large house or homestead, situated on the 'Burnside Estate' named 'Maindee House' also came from overseas in sections, originally in fulfilment of an order from a Mr Currie of Umkuzi, to be erected on his plantation of Indigenous rubber.....It was disposed of in Durban at an Auction Sale. It was knocked down at an extremely attractive figure and was purchased by Messers Tom Simpson and Frank Hillier, transported and assembled by them on what was known as the 'Maindee Syndicate Estate' (Pearse 1964:4). In 1920 Albert Landers became the owner.³ In 1926 the property was consecutively registered in the name Series and Co (also unclear), and Burnside Estates which was incorporated into Natal Estates Ltd. The latter was Sir Marshal Campbell's business holdings, which eventually became part of the Tongaat Hulett holdings. It is certain that sugar would have been grown on this property from early on, but unlike its large and established neighbours Cornubia and Blackburn, there is little information on it, nor, indeed, connected to any of its registered owners.

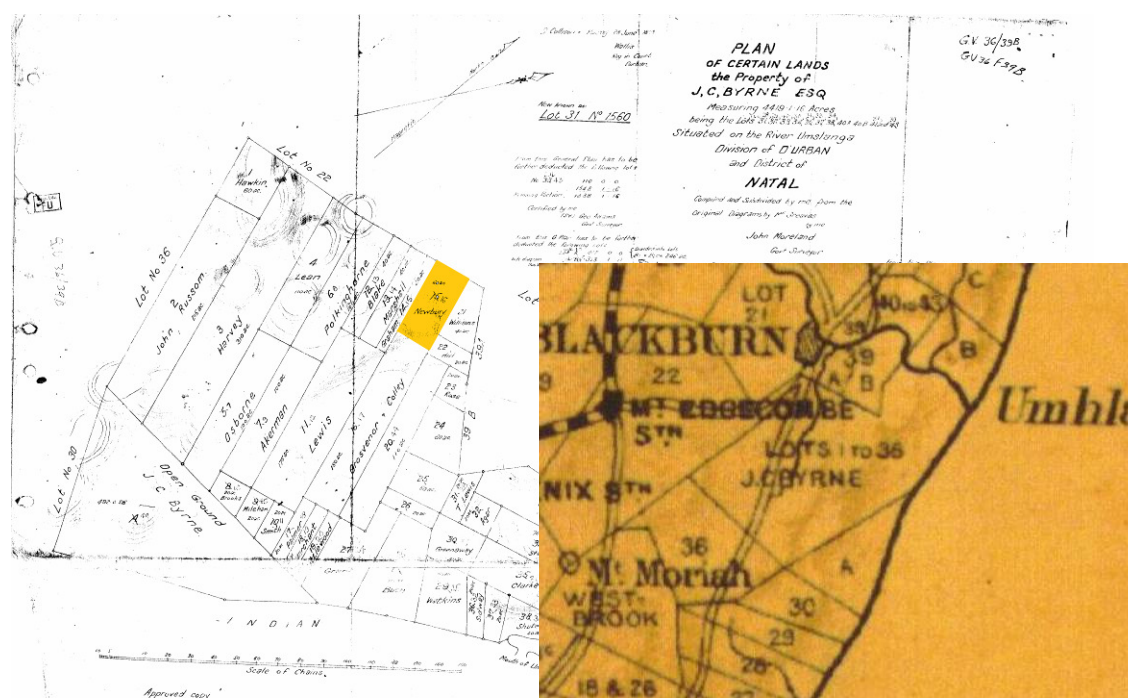


Fig 3: Survey diagram showing Byrne immigration lands. Lot 16 is highlighted. The Masson Map (1904 - inset) describes Lots 1-36 as lands belonging to JC Byrne and that the general description for the area north of this is 'Blackburn'.

¹ James Newberry at 'Blackburn' is named as a client of the Mount Edgecombe Mill in 1882 (Osborne 1964:150).

² The only relevant Oliver recorded in the Natal Almanacs shows a J Oliver resident at Mount Edgecombe in 1913, and H Oliver, Overseer at Ottawa in 1919. As for Simpson, T Simpson is recorded as being resident at Burnside Estates from 1919 to 1922. Prior to this, T Simpson merely gave his address as 'Mount Edgecombe' and JR Simpson was recorded as being Chief Engineer of Natal Estates. This was in 1918. They are also recorded as being members of the Maindee Syndicate (Pearse 1964:4).

³ Whether he was part of the Joseph Landers sugar clan at Umzinto is not clear at this stage.

4. Description and assessment of the house and environs



Fig 4: Showing location of components of site.

The site consists of two components: the main house enclosed in its entirety with a fence, and, to the north, a set of 4 orthogonal buildings of mixed construction which is labour accommodation. The latter is also of relatively recent construction and does not form part of this report, since it has little relevance in terms of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Heritage Act no 4 of 2008.

4.1 Visibility

The house is elevated on top of a levelled off dune, facing seawards into an expansive and established garden (see Fig 4 above). Rather than a view of the sea, the house overlooks the N2, Umhlanga College and the Gateway precinct. It is not visible from the highway, nor from across the canelands, other than the distinctive clump of trees in which it finds sanctuary. It is distant from other structures and does not act in any manner as a landmark for passers-by due to its elevation and obscurity.



Fig 5: View of the house from the front gate (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 6: View of the house from the ridge on which it sits (photo: Author 2011).



Fig 7: View of the house from the canelands to the west below (Photo: Author 2011).

4.2 External

The main house is a substantial dwelling consisting of two main wings and a kitchen area which was added on to the west. The current resident, Mr. Robert Grant, can remember the previous kitchen as being characteristically out in the yard. The roof is of corrugated sheeting, and is hipped with ventilators to both short elevations on the north and the east. The 1937 aerial photograph (see Fig 2) is not distinct enough to clarify the original form of the house.

The northern wing is largely surrounded by a veranda, with Tuscan columns, and French Doors leading out onto it. Portions have been enclosed over the years. This wing contains the reception rooms, and some sleeping quarters, with bathrooms. It also leads onto the new kitchen wing to the west. The southern wing appears as a later addition, given the windows and ventilator bricks to the sub floor area.

An important characteristic is the topophilia created by the well established garden which contains both indigenous and exotic plant species. It encloses the house totally, so that one is unaware as to the proximity of the busy N2 freeway below. This garden is an integral component of the value of the house, and, indeed, the value of the site.



Fig 8: View from front veranda across garden and N2 highway (Photo: Author 2011)..



Fig 9: The veranda on the northern wing (Photo: Author 2011)..



Fig 10: View of northern wing showing lawn space (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 11: North Eastern corner (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 12: North western corner with new kitchen wing on right (Photo: Author 2011)



Fig 13: View of north western corner (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 14: View towards south elevation and kitchen addition to left (Photo: Author 2011)



Fig 15: View of southern wing: the kitchen wing to the left (Photo: Author 2011)



Fig 16: South west end of the house with kitchen wing to the left (Photo: Author 2011)



Fig 17: South Elevation: the end of the south wing (Photo: Author 2011)



Fig 18: Looking north along the front elevation of the house (Photo: Author 2011)

The house has been extensively altered in the past: portions of veranda on the northern section have been enclosed to house a bathroom and sundry functional spaces, the kitchen has been added onto on the west, and the southern wing was either added at a later stage, or has had inappropriately proportioned fenestration comprising meranti cottage pane and standard steel sections applied at times.

4.3 Internal and condition

All floors are suspended Oregon pine, and most of the ceilings throughout are of board with a dentil moulding at the cornice intersection. The lounge has a medium-sized cast iron fireplace typical of the late Victorian period, together with glazed tile surrounds, set into a painted timber mantel. All the French Doors have been fitted with 'Trellidoor' type security systems.

The current resident, Mr. Robert Grant, says that much of the house is of lath and plaster construction, but that it is otherwise a solid building. Indeed, there was little to suggest on inspection that there was any evidence of major structural flaws or material failure, nor and evidence of gross lack of maintenance. The condition of the house is reasonable to excellent.



Fig 19: View of lounge. Note dentil mouldings in ceiling (Photo: Author 2011)..



Fig 20: Bedroom looking towards French Doors (Photo: Author 2011)..



Fig 21: Dressing rooms in enclosed veranda space to the north (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 22: Refurbished bathroom in enclosed veranda space (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 23: View from reception area (enclosed veranda space) towards rear veranda and wall of kitchen extension (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 24: View into new kitchen (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 25: Dining room in centre of house with doors into kitchen (Photo: Author 2011).

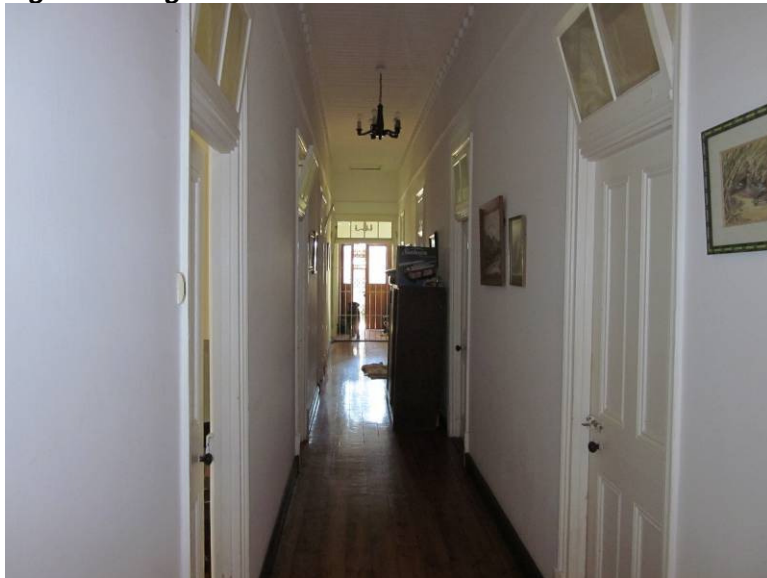


Fig 26: View down hallway of southern bedroom wing (Photo: Author 2011).

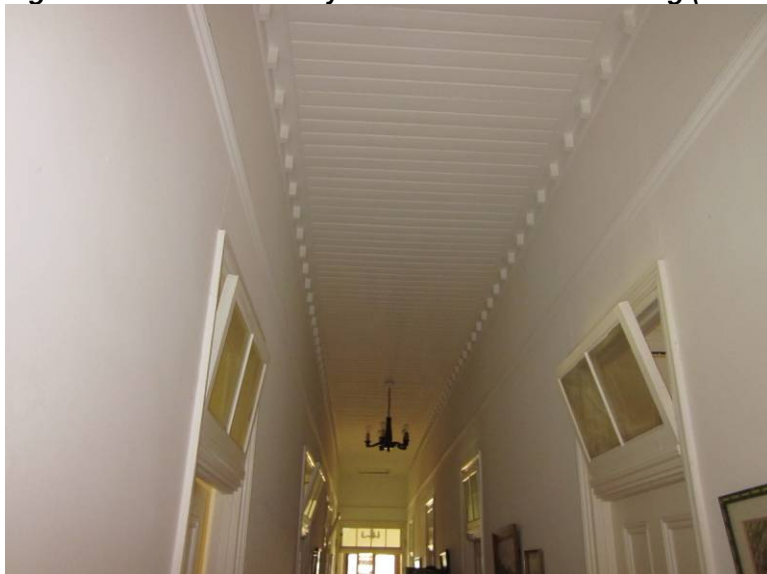


Fig 27: Dentil mouldings to cornice along southern wing (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 28: Showing fireplace in lounge (Photo: Author 2011).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Statement of significance:

significance	local	district	regional	national
Architectural	medium	low	low	low
Historical	low	low	low	low
Technical	low	low	low	low
Social	low	low	low	low
Scientific	low	low	low	low

The house is assessed as being over the age of 60 years, and thus subject to the general protection clause in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Heritage Act no 4 of 2008. The structure is evident within a developed garden in the 1937 aerial photograph (see figure 2). Although research carried out thus far has not established a specific date of construction, or builder, it is likely that this is the prefabricated 'kit' house purchased by Simpson and Hellier. As noted, few of these personalities turn up in the archival record, and Simpson, really, is the only person to be mentioned as working for Natal Estates Ltd. The Tuscan columns on the veranda suggest a construction date between 1910 and 1925, but these could have also replaced timber posts which had rotted, a characteristic practise in veranda houses in KwaZulu-Natal.

This report has found that this is a substantial dwelling, isolated in a private garden with which it is intimately connected. Although there are other notable and much more substantial examples such as Ottawa House in close proximity, most, like Cornubia and Mount Edgecombe House, have long disappeared in the face of rapidly northerly development.

Archaic Consulting is reticent to recommend outright demolition for this structure. Although altered, it is in good condition and has a sense of place in its position on top of the hill and its connection with the garden.

Primary recommendation: Skilful planning: - exploring the opportunity of retaining the house with the garden as executive office space in the new development. However, at the same time, it is recognised that its context will be removed as soon as the entirety of the new development begins, and that it is this context of canelands that created houses of this type. In addition, the entire hilltop on which it is located is intended to be removed. Thus its marginal social, historical and architectural value as well as its inaccessibility and lack of local landmark status should be weighed up when assessing an application for demolition.

6. References

Published references:

Osborn, R. 1964. *Valiant Harvest: the founding of the South African Sugar Industry 1848-1926*. Durban: South African Sugar Association.

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Saunders, C. 2007. *The history of the Tongaat & Hulett companies*
Mount Edgecombe: Christopher Saunders

Killie Campbell Collections:

The Natal Estates Ltd (Pamphlet)

Natal Estates Ltd. Mount Edgecombe (Photograph Album)

Natal Almanacs/ Braby's Directories 1881, 1897, 1905, 1910, 1915, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1926

Archival information: Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository

II NO 1/100 I234/1901 Nemah No 72195 Indian Immigrant indentured to The Natal Estates Limited Of Cornubia complains of assault by Sirdar Adam ON 9 February 1901.

II 1/103 I1682/1901 Nenaah 72195, Indian Immigrant, indentured to The Natal Estates Limited of Cornubia complains of assault by the Sirdar Sami on the 7th October.

II 1/105 I143/1902 Statement by Amurtham 73921 indentured to Natal Estates (Cornubia Estate): states that she is too weak to work with a hoe.

II 1/110 I1399/1902 Ramalingam Pillai 89638 indentured to Natal Estates Cornubia Estate: complain of assault by the new manager.

II NO 1/119 I1697/1903 Manager, Mount Edgecombe Estate, Mount Edgecombe: Adam No 5090 wishes to return to India after working 37 years on the Cornubia Estate.

REMARKS CSO8160/1903.

II 1/127 I1094/1904 Manager Natal Estates Ltd., Mount Edgecombe: Concerning time worked and rate of pay to Indian women at Cornubia Estate.

II 1/135 I973/1905 Protector Of Indian Immigrants Durban: Ramlal No. 98335 complains of assault by a white man. Cornubia Estate.

II 1/187 I2413/1912 Mr. PH Wetherell, Cornubia Estate, Mount Edgecombe: Re Indians Nanuk and Barti No. 70545.

II 1/183 I578/1912 K Hellier, Burnside: Re back-time to be served by Indian Velayutham No. 130286.